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EDITORIAL

Kids need rules

Federal programs can't replace parents

U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno will be in Lincoln tomorrow to review Nebraska's strategic plan for youth violence. Lincoln, Denver, Atlanta and Washington D.C. are part of the project called Pulling America's Communities Together (PACT) that matches community needs with federal resources.

There are high hopes for this youth violence prevention program. Agencies and individuals throughout the state have pulled together to develop this strategic plan.

People are tired of reading about 14-year-old kids pulling guns on each other. Incidents involving kids and guns used to be something that only happened in poor, inner-city neighborhoods. Then the phenomena spread to the suburbs, where kids were finding the household firearm and showing it off to friends, occasionally blowing off a head. Now, a minor pulls a trigger nearly every day in Omaha.

It's just a matter of time before a Lincoln teenager shoots someone, and all the federal resources in the world won't prevent it from happening. Only parents can prevent youth violence.

Quite a few of those parents regularly beat their spouses and their children. Some parents do drugs in front of their kids, and others use their children for sex. Some parents just ignore their kids, believing that a half an hour of "quality time" is sufficient daily attention.

People have to get a license to drive a car. They even have to wait a few days before they can purchase a handgun. Most professions require certifications, but anyone with adequate plumbing can make babies.

Perhaps some of those federal resources should go into educating the public about parental responsibility. Some people might continue to use their contraceptives if they thought parenting required more than a few minutes of quality time here and there.

Parents may have to be held responsible, to some extent, for the actions of their kids, particularly those parents who leave guns where kids can get to them.

Kids, just like everybody else, need rules, and rules need consequences. Too many parents are reluctant to enforce rules. The people who approved a few lashes from a bamboo cane for a young vandal are the same ones who are sick of seeing criminals, young and old, go unpunished in the United States.

The efforts of the attorney general along with several youth violence prevention programs are important, and they reflect the concern this nation has for a growing illness in this country.

Nothing, however, will prevent youth violence as much as birth control for people who don't have time to be parents.

EDITORIAL POLICY

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NEIL SPEARS

World Cup '94 ignites passion

As America agonized over every shred of new evidence in the O.J. Simpson preliminary hearings, something far more interesting was taking place near the converted soccer fields across America. The World Cup had come to the United States for the first time, and rabid soccer devotees from Russia to Cameroon to Brazil flooded the cities hosting the playoff matches. Americans, many of whom view soccer akin to warm milk, greeted the colorful fans with a sense of amusement and curiosity until the Simpson hearings diverted their attention. Only the surprising success of the U.S. soccer team, and the subsequent murder of Colombian star Andres Escobar, redirected America's focus to the World Cup. Escobar was shot by three men in Colombia, apparently for accidentally scoring a goal for the United States which resulted in a 2-1 loss for Colombia in the first round.

Still, the fans were the story in this edition of the World Cup, and Americans learned that these fanatical followers of soccer may not be much different from themselves. For example:

- World Cup fans are passionate. Tens of thousands of fans traveled hundreds of thousands of miles to cheer their team. The faithful paint their faces, chests, hair and other available body parts in their nation's colors. They stand the entire match, swaying in unison and waving their country's flag with pride.

- World Cup fans can be cruel and unforgiving in defeat. Escobar's murder reflects a trend, though a less violent one so far in the United States, of overemphasizing the role of sports — and winning — in society. A sign once hung in the locker room of the University of Minnesota that cautioned "Defeat is worse than death because you have to live with defeat." Three Colombian gunmen apparently disagreed.



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- World Cup fans are sometimes half-witted. As the Netherlands national team prepared to fly from Orlando, Fla., to Dallas for its next match, a Dutch sportswriter amused himself by telling a flight attendant that he had a bomb in his bag. The plane was quickly directed to an isolated area, and takeoff was delayed for five hours. The Dutch sportswriter now faces federal charges for the hoax.

- World Cup fans are very knowledgeable (with the help of the media). After Colombia's defeat to the United States, Colombia's newspapers ran front-page headlines as if the entire country was disgraced by the loss. Later, when Mexico was defeated in a shootout by underdog Bulgaria in the tournament's second round, the President of Mexico publicly criticized the strategy and substitutions employed by the team's coach.

- World Cup fans are sometimes half-witted (part two). An Albanian who was short of cash was so confident that Argentina would defeat Bulgaria in a first-round match that he staked his wife on the outcome. The wager seemed fairly safe: Argentina had won the World Cup twice, while Bulgaria had not won a single match in 17 previous attempts. Bulgaria's 2-0 victory left the dazed Albanian pleading for government assistance in recovering his wife.

- World Cup fans love a good rumor, regardless of whether it is true or not. Three months before the World Cup began, it was reported that the

Swiss national soccer team coach Roy Hodgson had informed his players that they would not be allowed to indulge in any sexual contact for the duration of the month-long competition. Hodgson denies ever making such a statement, but the fans aren't so sure.

- World Cup fans are sometimes treated to heartening displays of sportsmanship. The players of Cameroon, whose team was the Cinderella story of the 1990 World Cup, played most of the summer without being paid for their services. American fans, who watch as pro athletes averaging over \$1 million each year threaten to go on strike, appreciated the selflessness of the players.

The chaos and pageantry that follows the World Cup may come to America once more in the future. FIFA, the governing body of international "football," was impressed with the organization and sellout crowds the host country delivered. Thus, the United States may host the event again as soon as the year 2010. No doubt fans will still come from all over the world to support their team, creating more interesting anecdotes along the way. No doubt the United States will once again host a spectacular event. What remains to be seen is whether Americans will be able to give World Cup 2010 its undivided attention.

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